

Kerrich, Mary Eleanor
Fitzgerald
Homes and haunts of
Edward Fitzgerald

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HOMES AND HAUNTS
OF
EDWARD FITZGERALD

by

mary Eleanor Fitzgerald Kerrich

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HOMES AND HAUNTS OF EDWARD FITZGERALD.

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BY HIS GRAND-NIECE.

[Mary Eleanor Fitzgerald Kerrich.]

If the axiom be true that gifted men have gifted mothers, then Edward FitzGerald is no exception to the rule, his mother, Mary Frances FitzGerald, being a woman of mental abilities above the common, and very quick to perceive and foster talent in others. A very handsome woman, too, and one of the beauties of her day, as her portraits by Sir Thomas Lawrence—to whom, by the way, she is said to have sat twenty-four times—and by others (among them Chalon) testify. She married her first cousin, a Mr Purcell, and added, as one of the conditions of the marriage, she being a great heiress, her name and arms to his. FitzGerald was therefore descended on both sides from ancient and honourable houses, the Purcells claiming Norman blood no less than the Geraldines, who, makers of history, both in Florence—the cradle of their race—and in Ireland, have been a power to be accounted for, and where their misfortunes, for they had ever a knack of being on the losing side, have made them the heroes of many legends — true and otherwise.

Edward FitzGerald came, therefore, of no obscure parentage, but of people who lived in the best and most socially brilliant society of their day. He had no early struggles with poverty to overcome, no way to make in the world, and his eccentricities, which it must be owned were many, arose not out of lack of knowledge of the world and the ways thereof, but probably out of contempt for conventionality and a real humility—or was it pride?—which led him to suppose himself, his doing and sayings, of vastly little importance to the public at large, and of the indulgence of his own especial friends he was sure. And here be it said, that no man inspired more faithful friendships or was more unswervingly loyal to them and their demands upon him. Has he not himself said that they were "more like loves"? And all this I write of a purpose, for there has lately been somewhat of a desire, a natural desire, on the part of those who recognise his genius, to know something of the man, and much that has been given to the world about him comes from a source that knew FitzGerald on one side only—the side of those who were mentally and socially his inferiors, incapable of judging of his scholarship, and unable to understand that genius may not be measured by the stature of ordinary humanity. The mistake has arisen of publishing Boswellian-like trivialities, and of presenting them to the public as the complete portrait of a man who had exceptional claims, and knew fully their

value, to be called a man of birth and breeding, as well as those larger and more precious and infinitely rarer intellectual gifts of which he was quietly, but fully, aware also.

Thanks to Dr Aldis Wright's carefully chosen 'Letters,' the last volume of which is not the least fascinating, his admirers are able to obtain some reality of idea of FitzGerald the man, the scholar, yet always the dilettante; the poet, yet no dreamer of idle dreams, being indeed a very active philanthropist, whenever and wherever sorrow or poverty crossed his path or were brought to his notice; a clear-headed man of business, and above all things a seeker after Truth—a preeminently upright man.

The softly wooded scenery of Suffolk, which was dear to him, and was sung in now-forgotten verses by his friend and father-in-law, Bernard Barton, is perhaps nowhere more characteristic than in the neighbourhood of Woodbridge and Boulge. Boulge Hall belonged for some years to the FitzGerald family, who made it a place of residence during the summer months; but Edward FitzGerald lived from 1838 to 1853 not at the Hall, but in a picturesque cottage just inside the park gates—a somewhat curiously roofed (as to pitch) thatched cottage, with fair-sized rooms all on the ground-floor. It was afterwards handed over to the head gardener, a many-childed man, pleased with himself and not particularly inclined to rank lower than a poet, whose practical mind was more exercised with the housing when at home, and the setting forth into the world eventually, of his numerous progeny, than with intellectual problems. I believe that the walls bore traces for many years of where FitzGerald's prized—often written about, and often changed—pictures hung; and here, in a peace undisturbed by little save the cawing of rooks or the many-throated noises of ducks and geese enjoying the muddy freedom of a small farm hard by, he wrote many of his inimitable letters, and worked, unpressed for time, no seeker after fame, at his now famous translations.

How fascinating was the little farm just mentioned! A superior little farm with long French windows opening on a lawn, half-orchard, where ripe pears lay — through golden autumn days—long unheeded, save by wasps and venturesome children. It sat down at the gates of the Great House, whose humble and sincere friend it was, deeply interested in all the comings and goings of its denizens—and they were many—and, to tell the truth, not always easily accounted for, though not to be spoken of—in latter days—in the same breath with the magnificent exits and entrances of "Madam" FitzGerald's mother, whose personality and *entourage* seem always to have thrown a glamour of romance over the imagination of those about her. An independent little homestead, possessing in its own right an individual life and

charm, not swallowed up by its greater neighbour, and, more wonderful still, not apparently depressed by the mud-conquered nature of its immediate surroundings. Suffolk-clay mud—do you know what it can be and do? Walk only from Woodbridge to Boulge on a moody April day, when Spring's blue eyes, though they smile on the earth with a promise of summer, yet brim over suddenly, and a soft west wind, breathing on hidden violets and pale knots of primroses, intoxicating us with their subtle perfume, wakes in our hearts a remembrance of childhood's days, of the "long, long thoughts of youth," and, beat for beat, our heart answers the universal heart of Nature. Walk with me, as I say, and I will promise you that your finest aspirations, your most cherished hopes, your tenderest memories, will find alike their level and their counterpoise in your efforts to direct your steps in paths the least mud-enthralling, for Suffolk mud has a quality, a tenacity, and a deceitfulness all its own.

Up from the river Deven, where FitzGerald's little yacht, *The Scandal* (the "chief commodity" of Woodbridge), lay many a time awaiting a full tide to drop down to that tumbling, tossing, rough-and-ready North Sea that he loved. Up through the quaint, unchanging, little town of Woodbridge, clean, self-sufficing,—not to say, self-righteous,—narrow-streeted, of architecture most irregular, most original, up through this thoroughfare, past Loder's shop—so well known of FitzGerald, with its tempting bait of books and its kindly shrewd owner (a personage himself), one of the old race of booksellers, who loved their wares for their intrinsic merits, and would rather grudge you the possession of any part thereof unless, indeed, you could make good a claim to a discriminating appreciation of it.

The Bull Hotel, where FitzGerald sent many an invited—and uninvited—guest, and sometimes without the desired interview, be it added, is not in the Thoroughfare, but overlooks the Market-Place—site of Berry the gunsmith's shop, where, with a curious distaste for household management, he lodged for years, though owner of Little Grange, his manner of quitting which he tells so humorously in one of his published letters.

The Bull in FitzGerald's time was presided over by a renowned judge of horse-flesh, and many tales were repeated and believed of the mysterious envoys of highly placed personages—even crowned heads, be it whispered—who swooped down and carried off the bays, or the blacks, or the useful greys, whose curvetings and prancings had been the equal horror and admiration of sober good folk walking about their daily business.

But it is not past The Bull that we will walk. For our feet are on the hill which leads to the Little Grange, and from which we shall get a full view of the house as we approach it.

Originally a farmhouse, FitzGerald restored and added to it without destroying its character. Its fine barn was left standing, and on its eaves pigeons — purple-breasted carriers, egotistical fantails, and meek brown "nuns" — cooed out their interminable *affaires de cœur*. Here in the shadow of green trees still slept its duck-pond, provoking the remark, which amused FitzGerald so much, of his old man-servant, delivered after deliberation, "Well, them ducks du seem fond of the water, to be sure."

FitzGerald's home bore the clear impress of his individuality, of his love for Nature, of his clinging to associations for the sake of the past and for their own sake. Just as the barn was allowed to stand, kept in perfect order, so was left undisturbed the farm-kitchen, with its separate entrance, on a line with the porch of the front door, a kitchen wherein all things were kept by his little, active, elderly housekeeper, to a pitch of cleanliness and order that might be called painful. There lived — cherished possession — now, alas! seldom to be found —the little couple who, joint-tenants of a china house, with a startlingly vermilion roof and spotless walls, so regulated their walks abroad that, with tender gallantry, the gentleman only braved the inclement weather, leaving to "his lady," a matron of the sparest proportions, the delights of a promenade on a fine day. Where are you now, little weather prophet and prophetess, as true in your predictions as in your unswerving determination never to leave your little home unguarded by one or the other? There was a ribbed piece of seaweed too,— gift, possibly, from "Posh,"— stiff as buckram when the skies were clear, and dank as a mermaid's hair before rain.

FitzGerald's own side of the house overflowed with books, his books so often mentioned in his letters—his old, tried, valued friends. Madame de Sévigné, witty, tender, *grande dame au bout des ongles;* richly illustrated works on natural history; fiction, poetry, memoirs, chronicles. In paper covers, some. Some in fragrant tooled leather jostled each other, and laid their heads together after the fashion of books often consulted by their owner. FitzGerald was catholic in his tastes, but all must be of the best, of the aristocracy of literature. Into one room in particular, where books ran riot, well can I remember hung at one time his copy of the Cenci — exquisite figure of Youth chilled by the shadow of Death, for ever appealing, for ever protesting, on the threshold of another world, against the verdict of this one.

This copy was only a loan from one of his brothers, and was returned to its owner latterly. Another notable picture, the portrait of a Spanish woman[1] who, we were told, had seen her children

[1] Doubtless the Velasquez mentioned in the third volume of the 'Letters.'

first tortured, and then burnt before her eyes, by order of the Inquisition, had a peculiar fascination, mingled with repulsion, which caused one to look and look, and then long to turn and fly anywhere, if only out of reach of those haunted eyes—an undying protest against tyranny in spiritual places. And there were many more. A large sacred one, a copy of some celebrated Adoration of the Magi, I think, hung over the piano in the charming drawing-room upstairs; and there was much valuable china, in which FitzGerald's taste inclined to the oriental. He was no mean musician, either as executant or composer, but never, so far as I remember, played for any kind or sort of audience. "Madam, I do not perform."

There was a delightful bedroom over the porch. I think you went down two or three sudden steps when you opened the door, as is the way in old houses; but his own simple, almost bare, bedroom was on the ground-floor, and it was downstairs in the room adjoining it that he worked—green shade over his eyes, or laid ready beside him, at his tall desk, and standing.

The entrance-hall to Little Grange, not a large one, was much filled up and cumbered with a holland-swathed billiard-table—I never saw it played on. And here hung a powerful sketch, in chalks I rather think, of his seafaring companion, the now immortalised "Posh," the not too grateful captain of the *Meum and Tuum*, whose sternboard, bearing that device, is, or was, the property of the Omar Khayyam Club.

The amount of flower-garden was small, and rather severely laid out in regular beds alternating with parallel gravel walks, the whole divided from the farther-stretching meadow-like lawns by a red brick low wall, the topmost bricks beneath the coping-stones laid in an open fancy-work pattern. Wooden palings, and a wooden door made to look like the palings, and adorned with a formidable, almost mediæval-looking, iron handle, shut out the road: they were rustic and rough, with the bark left on. Much has been said of FitzGerald's roses. But the impression left on my mind was of poppies, brilliant masses of them, scarlet, with black hearts, pink, white, and soft heliotrope—an oriental blaze of colour, blended with some of the ineffable and indefinable charm of an Eastern embroidery, patterned like the hem of the robe of the great Haroun Alraschid, the gorgeousness yet tempered and balanced by a harmonising rhythm running through its maze.

At the back of the house, his "quarter-deck," as he called the path following the road-intercepting hedge, a green hedge this time,—hawthorn, not too much trimmed,—fled up a grassy hill, much daisy-decked, and beloved of dandelions, whose numerous broad faces were safe here from the ruthless uprooting practised on more petted lawns. And here, as one mounted, came the wind

to greet one, strong, salt-laden, from the not far-distant sea.

And in the masking hedge a gate—opening somewhat stiffly, reluctantly — through which FitzGerald often stepped, his face set Boulge-wards. Past a little red house where lived two children, the enfranchised of his demesnes at their pleasure, to whom his scholarship was as nought, and of whose abstracted aloofness of bearing they felt no awe. Delightful were the surprises he had in store for them. A wicker cage for their doves—it "should always be a wicker cage," he said, and they believed him; a pendant heart, roughly fashioned from the amber picked up by himself on the then almost solitary Felixstowe beach; a classic-shaped, slender-necked, pink flower-vase; an elaborate piece of Berlin woolwork — ready for "grounding." Brilliant-hued eye-destroying fantasy, an indication, perhaps, of his even then failing sight. Past Bredfield Hall, FitzGerald's birthplace, much loved by him. His verses on this "dear home" showed "real originality," he thought, and he would sometimes speak of his life there as a child. Of his father, ready to mount and trying the new lash of his hunting-whip; of his grandfather, an awe-inspiring personality,—who held a kind of levée when he was powdered every morning,—and so on to the very gates of Boulge itself, which had in those days, and probably has now, the look of a French château. Mansard-like its topmost story, and a decided perron led up to the front door. In summer scarlet geraniums and yellow calceolarias made patches and ribbons of colour in all the surrounding greenness; and a curious kind of *étagère* with an abundance of less hardy pot-plants stood under some trees on the right of the house—benches near it that you might admire at your ease. A second iron gate gave on to the garden from the park, and through its grille floated the scents, the very essence and soul of the parterre within. A heavy gate it was, difficult to open, swinging vindictively into place—a gate to speed the parting, but hardly one to welcome the coming, guest. But whatever its faults, it led into the garden, a garden all changed now—bettered perhaps, though those who knew it long ago could find no change better for them; for gardens, like human beings, are dear, and loved for their very imperfections.

Before the front door, rampant over which was a disconsolate stone monkey, the FitzGerald crest, clinging, I think, to a weather-vane, was a grey-tiled, raised flower-bed, a sort of pivot on which the carriage-drive turned. A kind of gigantic bouquet-holder it looked, and always a mass of brilliant blossoms, a gem of scented colour.

Under the window, on the sill of which an Æolian harp mourned in minor keys, rebuking a passing breeze for its levity, were narrow borders set with all manner of wholesome, cheerful, old-fashioned flowers—mignonette, columbines, lark-

spur, sweet-peas, snapdragon, climbing roses with space and to spare, and loved by the bees. To the left of the house, and out of sight of chance callers, was a little, formal, quaint Dutch garden, its box-edged borders and tiny gravelled paths laid out with mathematical precision, and starred with early spring flowers,—snowdrops, crocuses, aconites, anemones, and suchlike. It was FitzGerald's mother's toy, and still kept as she would have seen it from her windows. The garden abounded in shady walks—one so shady that moss invaded the path, and everywhere the scent of lilac, and laburnum's golden shower.

> "And Gaekier snowballs shone—
> Mimicking winter, now that they
> Felt certain he was gone."

To the right of the house, just beyond the garden, over a rustic bridge, shaky and slippery with lichen, and spanning nothing more formidable than a fern-fringed wide ditch—often dry—stands the church, the little grey church under whose shadow FitzGerald sleeps, Persian roses planted at head and foot. But, alas! not one bears, not one taking kindly to the cold clay Suffolk soil. The quaintest chapel-like mausoleum hard by is the family vault. Probably he had a dislike to vaults—at all events his grave lies open to sun and wind, marked by a granite recumbent cross. Within—I write of some years ago—the church was plainly benched with oak, the seats belonging to the Hall filling up most of the north side of the nave, and the cheerful sun streamed in through the rough plain glass windows. Outside a pleasantly frolicsome breeze swayed all the green things to its mood, and wafted in through the open side-door—the entrance for the Hall folks—all manner of alluring messages from the faintly sweet syringa-blossoms, and the fruit-promising orchard trees,—not the least a pretty church, but self-respecting, unpretentious, much like the people who worshipped in it every Sunday, coming up from the outlying village by right-of-way across the park.

The American garden—why so called an unsolved mystery—led round, after you had passed the orchard, to the warm, sheltered kitchen-gardens, walled in with fruit-trees against the walls and ranges of hothouses, and strawberry-beds white with blossom, or netted in and some poor bird struggling in the meshes. Just an ordinary kitchen-garden, but so full of pleasant surprise, so redolent of clean sweet smells, so thoroughly comfortable, well looked after.

The house, Boulge Hall, had that indescribable air of *bien être* inside that the outside led one to expect. In the outer hall were flowers again,—great pots of fuchsias sometimes,—and it was oddly furnished with wonderful old cabinets, through whose glass doors were to be seen sets of valuable china. And there were quantities of books, too, marble statuettes, and a faint scent as of rose-

leaves and lavender pervaded everything.

These, through the inner hall, where the shallow-stepped wide staircase led up to the cheerful morning-room, and books, books met your eye everywhere. Books in old bookcases, jealously screened by a fluted green silk curtain, books piled on tables, books heaped on chairs, and books in the course of being written sometimes. Downstairs was the Book-Room, and perhaps it deserved the name more than any other of the living rooms, for here books reached from the floor to the ceiling. All sorts of books in all sorts of bindings. There were portfolios of rare engravings, too; and FitzGerald's mother smiled at you from the last canvas on which Sir Thomas Lawrence ever painted her. It was a long room this, and had several windows, high, rather narrow, —much curtained windows, as I remember them,—looking out on the gravelled sweep in front. Indeed the room was so long that it boasted two fireplaces, near one of which stood a chamber-organ, filling with vibrant power, cheerful yet solemn, the many-roomed house, when, as was often, its harmonies, set loose, floated out into the garden and died away in the shrubberies, or faintly reached the children in bed in the far-away nurseries, causing them to wonder whether the angels played like that.

In the Book-Room, too, were kept several Naseby relics,—Oliver Cromwell's "Black Jack" for one. The historic ground of Naseby had been in the possession of the FitzGerald family, one of whose immediate ancestors, a bluff gentleman in seventeenth-century armour and scarlet cloak, whose portrait, looking fiercely out of its frame, yet with a tinge of melancholy as if prescient of his fate, hung over the carved oak sideboard in the dining-room, fell upon that field, fighting, rather oddly for a FitzGerald, for, and not against, his king. And about Naseby Carlyle wrote in 1845 to Edward FitzGerald:[1]—

"Chelsea, *April 4th*, 1845.

"Dear FitzGerald,—I am got to Naseby—among my letters. I dare not open the big packet, fruit of our joint-investigations long ago. I do it from memory, being in haste, double and treble. And so I want you with your best eyes to revise this, which I have got copied for you, and to correct it where you find need. The Main 'Hill' you see I have forgotten, and trust to you for.

"I have a note off to his Grace of Man^{tr}., but as yet no answer.—In great haste—great and perpetual,

"T. Carlyle."

FitzGerald's father and mother raised a memorial column at Naseby with the following inscription:—

"TO COMMEMORATE

that great and decisive battle fought on this Field on the 14th day of June 1645 between the Royalist Army commanded by His Majesty King Charles the 1st and the parliament Forces headed by the Generals Fairfax and Cromwell which terminated fatally for the Royal Cause and for

[1] This letter has not been published previously, but I have Carlyle's literary representatives' permission to do so.—M. E. FG. Kerrich.

years plunged this nation into Anarchy and Civil War serving as a useful lesson to British Kings never to exceed the Bounds of just Prerogative and to British subjects never to swerve from the allegiance due to their legitimate monarch.

THIS COLUMN

was erected by John FitzGerald Esq. and Mary Frances his wife. Lord and Lady of the Manor of

NASEBY.
A.D. 1823."

A curious engraving on a kind of biscuit-coloured paper, representing the field of Naseby with the column very much *en évidence*, hung in a corridor at Boulge; a bleak and tempest-tried landscape enough. And hard by, as if to emphasise the "useful lesson," was a framed facsimile, as a painting, of the "Man Charles Stewart's" death-warrant, signed and with dependent seals. Downstairs was a fine copy of Vandyck's Charles I. on Horseback. In the drawing-room were exquisite miniatures of the king and of Henrietta Maria—hers bearing a strong resemblance to that of her brilliant, lovable, wayward, ill-fated child, the Duchess of Orleans, as Belliard has preserved her for us. In the inner hall hung a picture of Lord Edward FitzGerald, the husband of the bewitching, mysterious Pamela—the generous-hearted, hot-headed, wrong-reasoning visionary, the dupe of more calculating minds, all his character, fiery, poetical, enthusiastic, written on his face.

The house abounded, overflowed with family portraits. One of FitzGerald as a boy with his two brothers; most charming in the graceful turn of the young heads and lithe figures—full of life, promise, and originality. FitzGerald himself once called the dining-room "a well hung round with one's ancestors." It was a room rather darkened by a large conservatory which led out of it, and by its oak furniture and somewhat sombre hangings. A wood-fire gladdened it often, and a quaintly delightful one-armed armchair lived near a reading-table, and the latter near the fire.

From the upstairs rooms the park lay stretched out, green—wide—softly merging into woodlike copse—an oasis of rest, deep in the brain-soothing Suffolk country, far from the shriek of a train and the nerve-destroying telegraph office.

It was here that I last saw FitzGerald—not many months before he fell into that peaceful sleep from which there was to be no awakening this side of the "Door of Darkness."

I had been spending an hour or so of the morning with him, seeing him write at his tall untidy desk—apples on it, one of which he munched, offering another to me—and I had persuaded him to return to Boulge with me. So together we set forth, and much talk we had about the notes of the robin—how shrilly sweet and staccato, and from that to music. The music of Boulge Church in his youth, the rustic musicians, violoncello, violin, and flute players—lovers of their art and their instruments, and their—to them—all-perfect render-

ing of the church music of that day, quaint in its turns and harmonies, and intricate enough too, some of it.

He lunched at Boulge, bread and cheese, or some such very simple fare, and presently walked back to Little Grange, his large blue coat hanging loosely on his spare aristocratic figure, a little bowed then, a little feeble. He always had the "scholar's stoop" from the neck, his hat rather to the back of his head, and the dreamy abstract look in his quite wonderfully beautiful blue eyes, —eyes which, with his incomparable smile, were unforgettable.

So he passed out of my sight, and out of my life, for I never saw him again.

Something of pathetic there was in the lonely man going quietly back to his lonely house — symbolical, typical of the intellect, so placed apart, so little known, so great as not to be desirous of a vulgar fame, so modest as to shrink from even appearing to claim it; for it should be remembered that, except to few, and those few capable of understanding what his gifts were, Edward FitzGerald was a recluse, amiable, if slightly eccentric. The world's judgment of him is posthumous, his genius it knows now—the man never, nor ever will.

Of Geldeston Hall, in Norfolk, the home of FitzGerald's sister Eleanor, Mrs Kerrich,— his favourite sister, the confidante of his literary enterprises, after whose death many years elapsed before he had heart to cross its threshold again,—it remains to speak.

Seen from Beccles churchyard, through an intervening two miles of somewhat grey atmosphere, it has a look of those delightful houses of about its own date that Bewick's tale-pieces make us so familiar with, —having the square rectilinear peculiarities of that period of house-building, — which encouraged no sacrifice of comfort to a mere *coup d'œil*, yet saved from a Meeting-House-like severity by the curve of the grey arch by which—and still led by a curve — the stables are reached from the pillared portico of the front door — magnolia-clad stables they were, but, alas! no longer are. These do not lack a certain old-world charm, and in the coach-house there used to stand — long, long ago — a travelling-carriage of the days when railroads were not, whose capacious seats held six inside comfortably, and more at a pinch. The coat of arms on the panels of heroic size. And in this carriage FitzGerald's little nephews and nieces — "the most delightful children in the world" he called them — made the, to them, highly entertaining and exciting journey from Geldeston to their grandfather's house at Boulge, and changed horses once on the way.

All about the sweet old Geldeston garden grew, and still grow, the flowers that memory loves, — clumps of green-veined double snowdrops; strong, gaudy, crimson peonies; the rare wild white violet; many-thorned, clean-

scented Scotch roses; and, a little to one side of the dining-room window, a large cherry-tree, during its short day a vision of blossom to inspire a Japanese muse — exquisite, dainty, a *débutante* in softest white. This garden is set about with a tree-studded park, running down to grey lichen-covered oak palings; and there, in the spring, old pink May thorns give of their very best, arranging themselves in clusters of coral-like, half-opened buds, provoking the crab-apple and the white thorn to a happy emulation. There too, all through the long June evenings, thrush and blackbird sing concerto far into the night, and the nightingale pours out her soul in a very ecstasy of passion.

And inside there greets you a mellow calm and warmth—a cheerfulness tempered with discretion, the heritage of old country houses. There, in the library, of which FitzGerald speaks in his Letters, are the books of which he also speaks —sitting up late to read them in company with his pipe, but "in the kitchen" after the servants had gone to bed. Do not be startled, such was the custom in the old days, but then—women did not smoke!

A library penetrated with the delightful smell of old bindings and where the books are the slow growth of the care and taste of generations. Heavy volumes with brass-bound corners, sets of old classics — French, English, Greek, Latin —with names of father and son on their fly-leaves, as each succeeded each in the custody of the treasure; and they boasted book-plates, some of them, too, with heraldic or quaint devices. Here is 'Gerard's Herbal,' 1636, for lovers of flowers — brave English; and hard by 'A Display of Heraldry by John Gwillim, late Pursuivant of Arms,' date 1638. And older still, and stirring to the blood, 'L'Histoire du Bertrand de Guesclin, Conestable de France.' A James I. Bible and Prayer Book—ponderous, heavy — with curious metal corners. One wonders how many children learned their catechism out of its yellowing pages, what possible bride "in gleam of satin and glimmer of pearls" consulted it for her vows, what cold painful tears have rained down on its Burial Service through all this mist of years! The Countess of Pembroke's 'Arcadia,' no more modern edition than that of 1638, is close by Spenser's 'Faerie Queene,' but this is a new edition of 1763; and a shelf or two farther on, 'Il Decamerone di Messer Giovanni Boccaccio,' which has seen the vicissitudes of nearly four hundred years and stood up well against them, transports us to other climes and other skies and other ways, let us hasten to add.

And who can pass White's 'Selborne,' with that wonderful engraving of the author's tent and garden, and the fine ladies who graced them, and so obviously found tight-lacing and a large hoop unsuited to much exercise! One unfortunate is indeed seated on the

slope of the hill, fan in hand —the victim of fashion, and evidently "vastly uncomfortable."

Harrington's 'Oceana' and Montaigne's wit and wisdom, Swift's satire and Johnson's sonorous prose. The 'Eikon Basilike,' that portrait of the king, whose portrait, drawn by Clarendon, FitzGerald, we know, pondered over and over. And so many more — old friends — always there, presenting always the same face. Dear Books! About you hangs the perfume of carefully tooled leather, the time-imparted mellowing of long summer days, when the warm breeze fluttered your leaves as you lay on the window-seat and the sun touched your binding with a seasoning heat. Of winter nights, when the snow fell spluttering on the oak-logs down some wide chimney, which roared for very joy of the flames and the aromatic sting of the smoke. And on the bright days and genial nights—so long ago—you told, as you are still ready to tell, your blood-quickening tales of love and war, of man's chivalry and woman's constancy, of feasting and mourning, of life and death—the old, old stories, but ever re-enacting and to re-enact till Time himself shall fail.

From the library windows flower-beds, then the trees and grass of the park, stretch away down the road, and beyond it fields, and the marshes beyond them again, and up the river a heavy-laden wherry works its way—its ruddy wine-coloured sail useless, for that reach of the river is uncaught by the wind, and the men must quant with shoulder to the pole, and voices float upon the breeze and fall faintly on the ear, mingled with the splash of the "quanting-poles" in the water. The sun and the scent of mignonette come in at the windows too, and the room wakes, as it were, from a dream of past days to a very present and delightful reality. Come out of it, though, and into the hall. Engravings hang there — and hunting pictures, a whole series, men in pink and eager horses; and portraits, too, of old family favourites — dear four-legged faithful comrades. And so on, into the inner hall, from whose walls the faces of dead and gone women counting kinship, though divided by long stretches of the river of Time, with the to-day owner of the house, and so to the dining-room with its wide west window, through which the afternoon sun sends friendly glances, lighting up more portraits, one by Lely, and a tenderly painted scene on the Thames by Ewbank, and bringing out the red lights in the old mahogany furniture —sideboard, brass bound, wine-cooler with boxed legs and slightly bacchanalian appearance, and heavy chairs, whose morocco has faded into complete harmony with the rest of its softly subdued surroundings.

Mahogany, when will you be fashionable again? Did not your sap rise warm and vigorous under the eye of a tropic sun long ago, in some parasite-wreathed orchid-haunted West

Indian forest, where the humming-bird built its tiny cup-like nest, and the fire-flies danced in bewildering, rhythmic splendour — golden, ruby, emerald green? Surely some of that warmth and light are your hidden treasure still, mysteriously hinted at when the fire smoulders red on the hearth, or a sunbeam makes your heart glow like the blush on the face of a dusky beauty in the palm-fringed land of your growth.

The pot-pourri-scented drawing-room — many-windowed, gilt-corniced — led into a conservatory which seems always to have the very flowers you most love growing in it. Surely no orange-blossom is sweeter than that of these miniature trees, and what complexion can vie with the delicate charm of an old-fashioned double pink geranium? Mystic passion-flowers, pink of propriety camellias, full-scented Madonna lilies, fragile roses, luxuriant plumbago,—all here, and cyclamen and azaleas, and many others. Not the "smart set" of flowers, but those that FitzGerald's sister loved, and he also. The robins of which he wrote approve this conservatory, and make of it their Riviera.

Of the carved oak staircase opposite the drawing-room door, past the great copy of Rafaelle's Transfiguration and a Madonna and Child — the mother a sleeping Italian peasant, whose distaff is slipping from her hand, while, all unconscious of his presence, the guardian angel watches alike over her and her divine Son, rosy in childhood's dreamless slumber—on the wide landing, and into FitzGerald's own room —white, cool — the windows looking out over marshland and river towards the grey tower of Beccles Church. The room is very simple, very much like other old country-house bedrooms, with its large, almost square bed, its toilet-table of dark wood, its sofa wardrobe, bright steel hearth, its old engravings—the beautiful Countess of Coventry, Napoleon the Great in his mantle of state, laurel-crowned. The entire house is full of mementoes of the Corsican, one of its owners having passed some time in France at the beginning of the undignified St Helena episode. In the air and about the room things are of lavender-scented purity, which at once embalms and symbolises FitzGerald's own pure, almost puritanically sober, life.

And in this room still hangs a picture — a rustic scene — which belonged to FitzGerald, and which on his last visit, not long before his death, he desired should remain where he, most likely, had himself hung it; for he had a nice taste in the hanging of pictures, as readers of the 'Letters' will remember.

And of the pathos of that last visit I would, in conclusion, say a few words. Perhaps he felt that his eyes, which had latterly failed him grievously, were about for ever to close on an earth whose beauties they had so keenly enjoyed. Perhaps, like all of

us when life lays a detaining hand on our powers and forces our thoughts backwards and ever backwards, the tide of recollection bore him to the home of that sister who understood him best, and whose children were to him an unfailing centre of interest and affection. But whatever the impelling force, after years of absence he desired again—perhaps to himself he said, "For the last time"—to go over the haunts of his early manhood, to walk through rooms, empty now for ever, of some dear presence. With what thoughts may we think he did go—all alone, as was his express wish—about that dear house whose memories lay warm around his heart—that house whose greeting was cheerful with goodness, whose wide-windowed rooms welcomed every gleam of sunshine, whose long passages have echoed with the sweet laughter of children, beneath whose roof all the natural events of life had fulfilled themselves within his span of years. Life and death, marriage, and joy and sorrow—primeval forces acting and reacting upon each other, the elements of tragedy and comedy—great educators of the human heart, and to be met wherever that heart shall beat.

FitzGerald drove out from Beccles in a pony-carriage, lent by his dear old friend Mr Crowfoot,—gone too now,—and alone, as I have said, went over that house, whose very dust must have had a voice for him; went over its rooms, and down the long wing passage, and up to the bright attics, whose windows look far over marsh and river, rich in unexpected cupboards, cunningly papered to resemble the wall into which they were built, and in little spindle-legged tables and bureau-topped, brass-handled chests of drawers, in rush-bottomed chairs and painted portraits; and perhaps even higher up, on to the roof itself, from whose leads in the days of the Chartist troubles blazing stacks were seen in all directions.

What his thoughts were we shall never know now; perhaps they may be summed up in one of his own immortal quatrains:—

> "The moving Finger writes—and having writ
> Moves on—nor all your piety, nor wit,
> Can lure it back to cancel half a line,
> Nor all your tears blot out one word of it."

MARY ELEANOR FITZGERALD KERRICH.

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